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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 001284

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF DAS YAMAMOTO AND AF/E  
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [ET](#) [ER](#)  
SUBJECT: DSRSG ENNIFAR DISCUSSES UNMEE DOWNSIZING,  
ETHIOPIAN-ERITREAN VIEWS OF DEMARCATION

REF: ADDIS ABABA 419

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES VICKI HUDDLESTON. REASON: 1.4 (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. UNMEE's outgoing Force Commander now opposes downsizing the UNMEE to an observer mission with half its current force strength, reflecting either pessimism that Ethiopia and Eritrea will proceed with demarcation, or a desire to preserve the large presence of Indian troops who now comprise one-third of the mission's military personnel. UNMEE DSRSG Ennifar underscores that the composition and quality of troops is more significant than their number, citing UNMEE's lost of intelligence capacity following Eritrea's expulsion of U.S. and European MILOBs. Ennifar reviewed recent meetings between UNMEE SRSG Legwaila and both President Isaias and Prime Minister Meles: Isaias remains concerned about the specific role Gen. Fulford would play, while Meles continues to refer to Ethiopia's five-point peace plan. DAS Yamamoto highlighted the critical need for normalization talks, and for parties to send political, rather than technical, representatives to the next EEBC meeting in April. END SUMMARY.

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OUTGOING FORCE COMMANDER FORSEES NEED TO REOPEN BORDER POSTS  
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12. (C) In March 30 and April 1 meetings with visiting AF DAS Amb. Donald Yamamoto, AF/E desk officer William Schofield, Charge, and poloff, United Nations Mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (DSRSG) Amb. Azouz Ennifar reported that

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outgoing UNMEE Force Commander Major-General Rajender Singh had "changed his mind" and now no longer favored downsizing UNMEE to an observer mission of approximately 1,500 military personnel (i.e., option 3A outlined in UN SYG report S-2006-1). According to Ennifar, MG Singh now asserted that cutting UNMEE's actual force strength by nearly one-half would not be feasible, as it would not allow UNMEE to monitor the Ethiopia-Eritrea border adequately or to support demarcation. Ennifar explained that MG Singh sought additional UNMEE troops to ensure that no Eritrean troops violated the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ): Eritrea continued to impose daily restrictions on UNMEE's freedom of movement within the TSZ, and UNMEE was only able to monitor "5 per cent" of the eastern part of the border, Ennifar said. UNMEE could fulfill its mandate only if such restrictions were lifted, he said.

13. (C) Ennifar explained that Singh sought to reopen many outposts previously closed by UNMEE (18 sites were closed in the TSZ following Eritrea's restriction on helicopter flights in October 2005). In contrast, Ennifar said, UNMEE's chief administrative officer (a former Russian military veteran) believed that reopening such a large number of posts would be unnecessary, due to the goodwill that would exist were the parties to agree to demarcation. Ennifar commented that MG Singh may have changed his position to protect the well-being of Indian troops. Ennifar added that the new Force Commander, a Jordanian, may feel differently about downsizing UNMEE. (NOTE: Contingents from India and Jordan each comprise nearly one-third of UNMEE's approximately 3,000 total military personnel. END NOTE.) The Ethiopian military was "pro-UNMEE," Ennifar added, while Ethiopia's civilian leadership was less supportive of UNMEE's role.

14. (C) DAS Yamamoto observed that the United States favored downsizing UNMEE to an observer mission of 1,500, but would likely defer a decision until mid-May. Were the UNSC to endorse this option, downsizing would require approximately 3-4 months, Ennifar said, in order to identify which troops would be cut. A force structure of 1,500 military personnel would be comprised of 600-700 infantry, 300 military observers (MILOBs), demining, and medical personnel, he said. Ennifar underscored that quality, not quantity, of troops mattered most, noting that UNMEE "lost its intelligence capacity" following Eritrea's December 2005 expulsion of U.S., European, and Russian staff, due to the departure of U.S. and European MILOBs.

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ERITREAN AND ETHIOPIAN CONCERNS  
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ADDIS ABAB 00001284 002 OF 003

15. (C) Both Ethiopia and Eritrea understood the U.S. initiative represented a "last opportunity," Ennifar said, adding that neither the AU, UN, or Algeria could be expected to reprise the active role they previously played when Witnesses to the 2000 Algiers Accords. Ennifar recommended waiting until after the April EEBC meeting to determine whether a visit by the EEBC commissioners to the region would be helpful, noting that Ethiopia considered EEBC chairman Lauterpacht "pro-Eritrean."

16. (C) Amb. Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, who would depart April 30 after five years as UNMEE SRSG, had paid a farewell call on Eritrean President Isaias on March 31, their first meeting in nearly three years, Ennifar said. According to Ennifar, Legwaila reported that the meeting was very positive: Isaias had "absolved" the UN, including UNMEE and UN SYG Annan, of any wrongdoing, but was "upset" at the United States. While reportedly "happy" with the Secretary's letter sent to him immediately before the March 10 meeting of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC), Isaias had sought further information on the EEBC's terms of reference for General Carlton Fulford, comparing Fulford unfavorably with former UN special envoy Lloyd Axworthy. Isaias also indicated that Eritrea would lift restrictions on UNMEE's freedom of movement only if it were clear that demarcation would occur, Ennifar said. Ennifar added that Isaias, who has been in Massawa since January, had also met with Norwegian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Raymond Johansen (previously Norway's charge d'affaires in Asmara) and with a Chinese business delegation.

17. (C) Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin and Minister of State Tekeda Alemu were "very hard-line" on the border issue, and less open than Prime Minister Meles, Ennifar said. Seyoum needed to be convinced that Ethiopia would not be pushed to accept a decision. Ennifar noted that Meles had referred to Ethiopia's five-point peace plan in his March 28 address to Parliament, prompting opposition MPs to assert

they accepted the EEBC decision. (NOTE: Full text of Meles' address was forwarded March 28 to AF/E. END NOTE.) Ennifar observed that an internal survey conducted by UNMEE had concluded that fewer Eritreans would be effected by demarcation than Ethiopians. The port of Assab "was made for Ethiopia by Ethiopians" and could not be used effectively by Eritrea; the Netherlands was ready to assist in Assab's revitalization, Ennifar said. He noted that Ethiopia had not yet identified liaison officers to work with the EEBC, nor submitted a security plan for demarcators, although Eritrea had already done so two year ago.

18. (C) DAS Yamamoto observed that in a three-hour meeting with the USG delegation, Meles had displayed detailed knowledge of the border and geographic reference points. While the EEBC could not change the line of delimitation, the parties could address its impact, Yamamoto said, noting that an additional 50,000 residents could be potentially displaced. The United States had declared in 1999 that the parties much address land and water rights, he added. The property rights of some 80,000 Eritreans expelled from Ethiopia had not yet been addressed. The next EEBC meeting needed to address political, not merely technical issues, Yamamoto said; attendance by only legal representatives was not enough. Sanctions, for failure to observe UNSCR 1640, could not be ruled out. The United States would call another meeting of the Witnesses to the 2000 Algiers Accords, or help issue a Witnesses' statement addressing normalization talks, he said. To avoid having the beginning of demarcation "plant the seeds of war," both parties needed to discuss the root causes of war and commit firmly to confidence-building measures. Isaias had agreed to normalization talks two years ago but had since recanted; it was unclear what his current position was.

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SURVEYS, DEMINING, MUST PRECEDE DEMARCATION  
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19. (C) Ennifar noted that if political will exists to proceed with demarcation, it would not be completed for at least another year. He said that according to recent consultations with UNMEE's Mine Action Coordination Center (MACC), a minimum of three to six months would be needed prior to

ADDIS ABAB 00001284 003 OF 003

demarcation in order to conduct surveys; demarcation itself (to include necessary removal of landmines from pillar sites and access roads, and then planting pillars) would require an additional nine to twelve months. AF/E Schofield observed that an assessment/field survey for the east had been conducted, but not for either the central or western portions of the border. Ethiopia wanted to begin demarcation in the east; Eritrea did not, he added. AF/E Schofield agreed that a security plan was needed, even for the east; evacuation in extremis was a possible contingency, he added. DAS Yamamoto observed that once the east was demarcated, Eritrean troops in the TSZ needed to be disarmed and repatriated, not move to the central sector. Charge Huddleston highlighted the need to sensitize and involve village elders, to enable demarcation.

110. (C) COMMENT: With the imminent departure of SRSG Legwaila, DSRSG Ennifar will become acting head of the UN mission until Legwaila's successor arrives. SRSG Legwaila has previously asserted, on several separate occasions, that a downsized UNMEE observer mission would be not only viable but also capable of supporting demarcation, so long as Eritrea removed its restrictions on UNMEE's freedom of movement within the TSZ, including allowing the use of helicopter assets. END COMMENT.

111. (U) DAS Yamamoto cleared this cable.  
HUDDLESTON